

Fact Sheet: Restaurants
Surveillance Update: 1993-1999
Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project
Occupational Health Surveillance Program
Bureau of Health Statistics, Research and Evaluation
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
March 2000

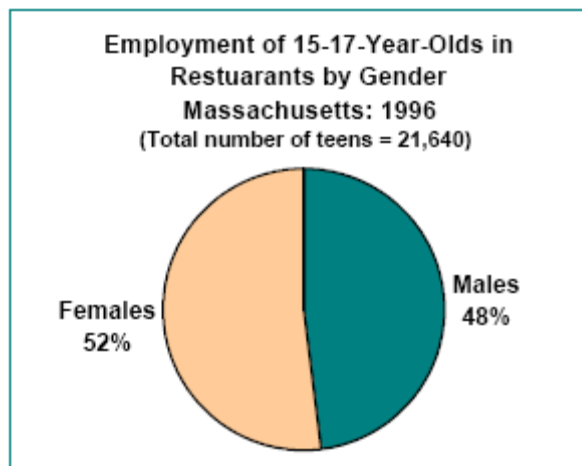
Background

More Massachusetts youth work in restaurants than in any other single industry. In 1996, the midpoint of the surveillance period, approximately one-fourth of all employed 16-17 year olds – more than 21,6000 teens – worked in restaurants. Restaurants are also the most common place of occupational injury for teen workers in Massachusetts. Of the 3,389 work-related injuries to teens identified by the *Teens at Work Project* from 1993-1999, 26% occurred in restaurants.

Gender

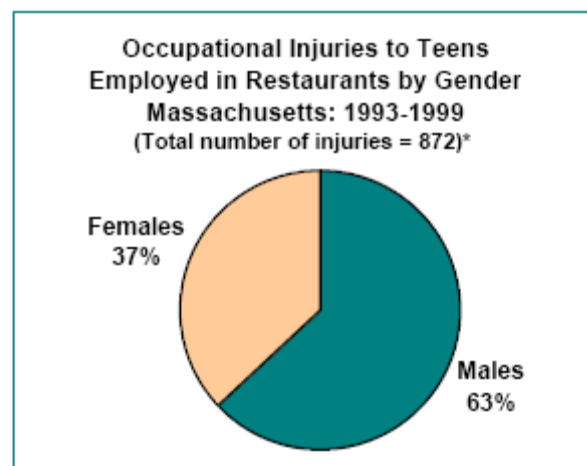
- Males made up slightly less than one-half (48%) of young workers employed in restaurants during 1996, the midpoint of the six-year surveillance period (**Figure 1**).
- Nearly two-thirds of all injuries to young restaurant workers occurred among males. (**Figure 2**). This finding is similar to that for injuries to young workers in all industries combined.
- Young males are at higher risk of injury than young females working in restaurants, based on employment percentages for 1996. The difference is likely explained, at least in part, by assignment of males to higher risk jobs within the restaurant industry.

Figure 1.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey: January-December, 1996.

Figure 2.



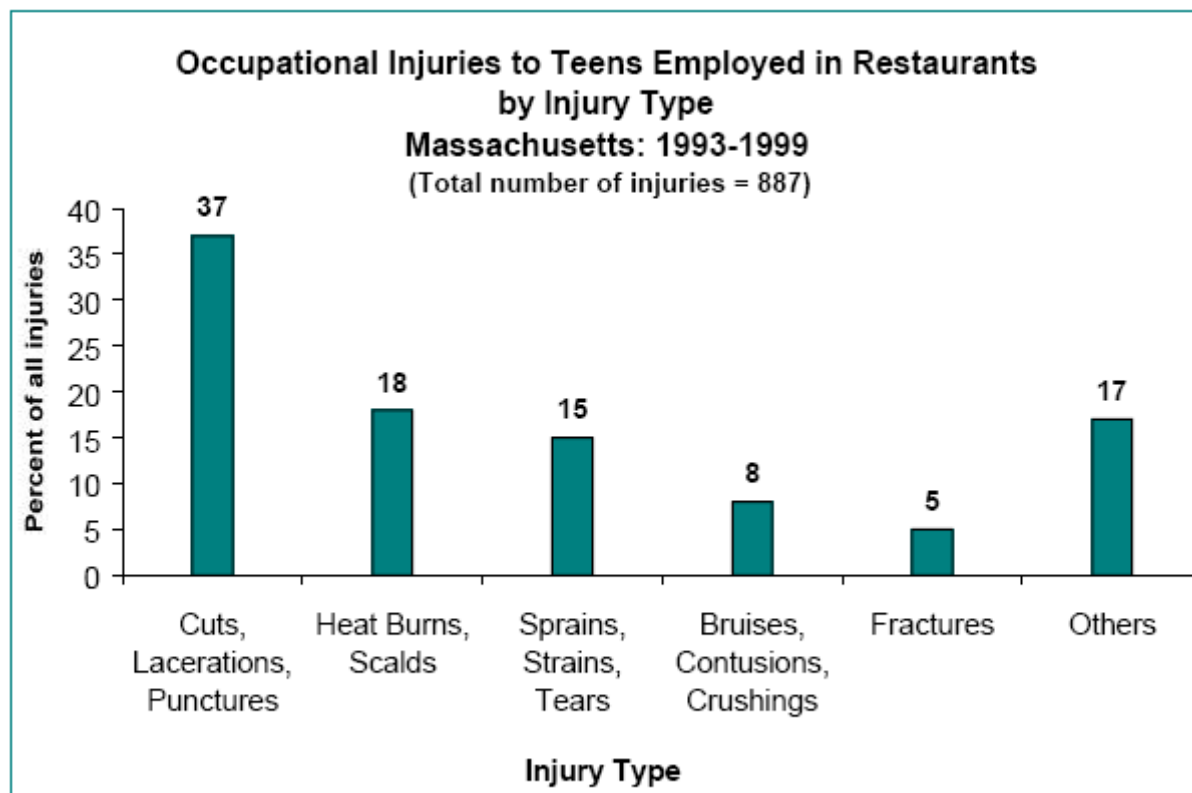
Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993-June 1999.

*Gender information was not available for 15 cases.

Injury Type

- Cuts, lacerations, and punctures were the most common type of injury, accounting for more than one-third (37%) of all injuries to teen restaurant workers (**Figure 3**).
- Heat burns and scalds, accounting for approximately one-fifth (18%) of all injuries, were the second most common type of injury, followed by sprains, strains, and tears (15%); bruises, contusions, and crushings (8%); and fractures (5%) (**Figure 3**).
- Cuts, lacerations, and punctures were the injuries most frequently reported by hospital emergency departments, whereas sprains, strains, and tears were the most frequently reported injuries identified through workers' compensation claims. If all hospital emergency departments in Massachusetts reported cases to the surveillance system, cuts, lacerations, and punctures would be even more predominant.

Figure 3.

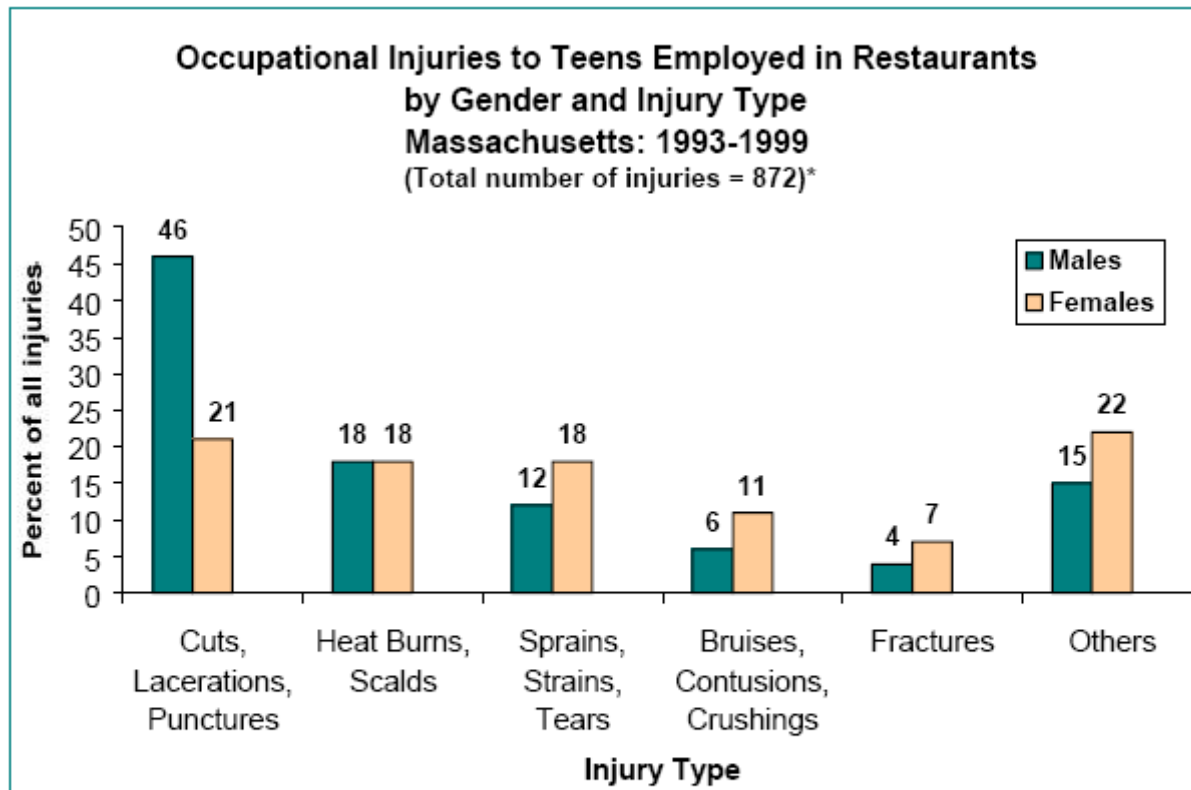


Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993 - June 1999.

Injury Type by Gender

- Injury type varied by gender for Massachusetts teens working in restaurants. Nearly one-half (46%) of all injuries to males were cuts, lacerations, and punctures. Among females, cuts, lacerations, and punctures only accounted for approximately one-fifth (21%) of all injuries (Figure 4).
- Females sustained proportionally more sprains, strains, and tears than males (18% vs. 12%) and more bruises, contusions, and crushings (11% vs. 6%) (Figure 4).
- Heat burns and scalds accounted for nearly one-fifth of all injuries to both males and females (Figure 4).
- Further research is needed to determine why the kinds of injuries sustained by young male workers differ from those sustained by young female workers. These differences might be explained, at least in part, by the different tasks assigned to young male and female workers.

Figure 4.



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993 - June 1999.

*Gender information was not available for 15 cases.

Cuts, Lacerations, and Punctures

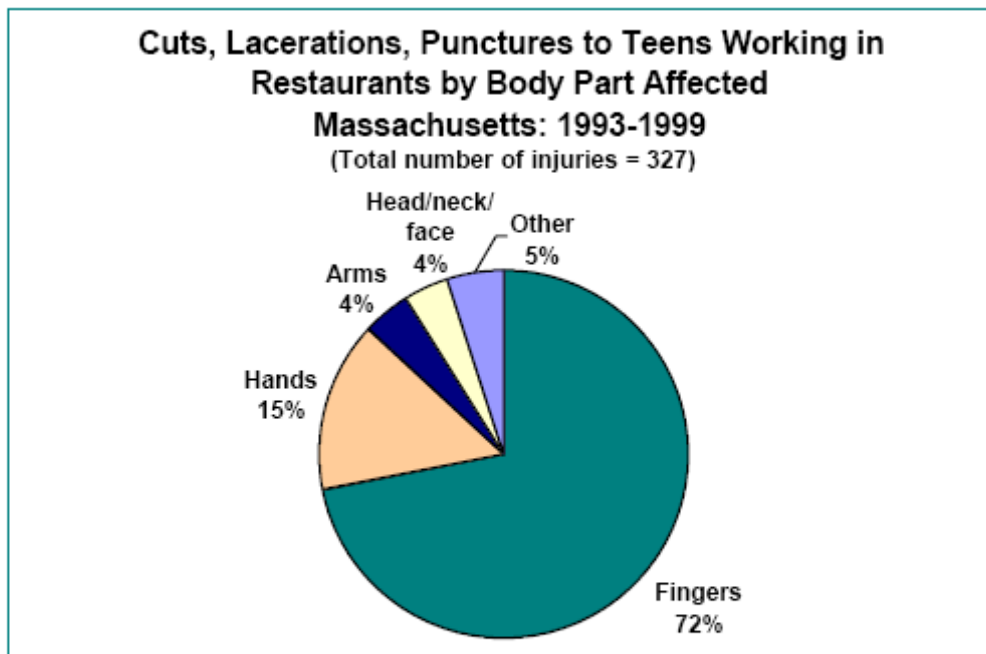
I was in the kitchen, taking dishes out of the dishwasher. The dishwasher is a U-shaped metal conveyer belt. At the end where I was, there is a metal latch that stops the dishes from falling off the belt once they're clean. I noticed there was some broken glass on the floor and when I went to pick it up, my hand slipped and got caught under the metal latch. I pulled out my hand and lost my fingernail in the process. My manager told to wrap up my finger but I stayed to finish my shift. About a week later my finger still hurt so I went to the ER.

At the time of the interview, three months after the injury occurred, the teen had not regained sensation in the tip of his finger and expected permanent scarring and loss of feeling.

16-year-old dishwasher

- Over 90% of all cuts, lacerations, and punctures affected the upper extremities, including the fingers (72%), hands (15%), and arms (4%) (**Figure 5**).
- Of the 327 reported cuts, lacerations, and punctures, information about the source of the injury is available for 129 of the injuries (39%). Knives were the most commonly listed source of injury (31%), followed by broken glass and dishes (19%). Eight reports list automatic slicers as the source of injury. *NOTE: Child labor laws prohibit workers younger than 18-years-old from operating or cleaning food slicing machinery.*

Figure 5.



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993 - June 1999.

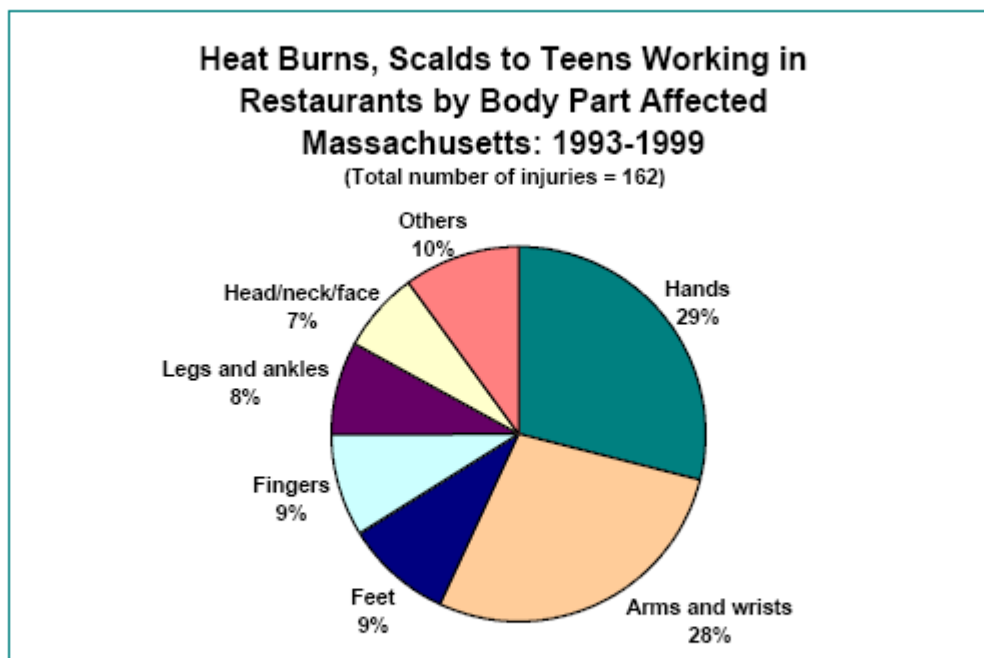
Heat Burns and Scalds

I was walking toward the grill with a package of bacon in my hand and there may have been grease on the floor. I slipped. I tried to grab on to the metal bar (handle) on the grill to catch myself but I missed the bar and my hand hit the hot grill instead. I stopped myself from falling but I ended up with second-degree burns on my right hand and fingers. There were no mats on the floor.

16-year-old grill trainee

- Over two-thirds of all heat burns and scalds affected the upper extremities, including arms (28%), hands (29%), and fingers (9%) (**Figure 6**).
- Heat burns and scalds affected the head, face, and neck in 7% of the cases (**Figure 6**).
- Of the 162 heat burns and scalds, 80 reports (49%) contained information about the source of the injury. Grease and hot oil is listed as the source of injury for 29% of these reports, hot water and steam is listed as the source in 25% of the reports.

Figure 6.



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993 - June 1999.

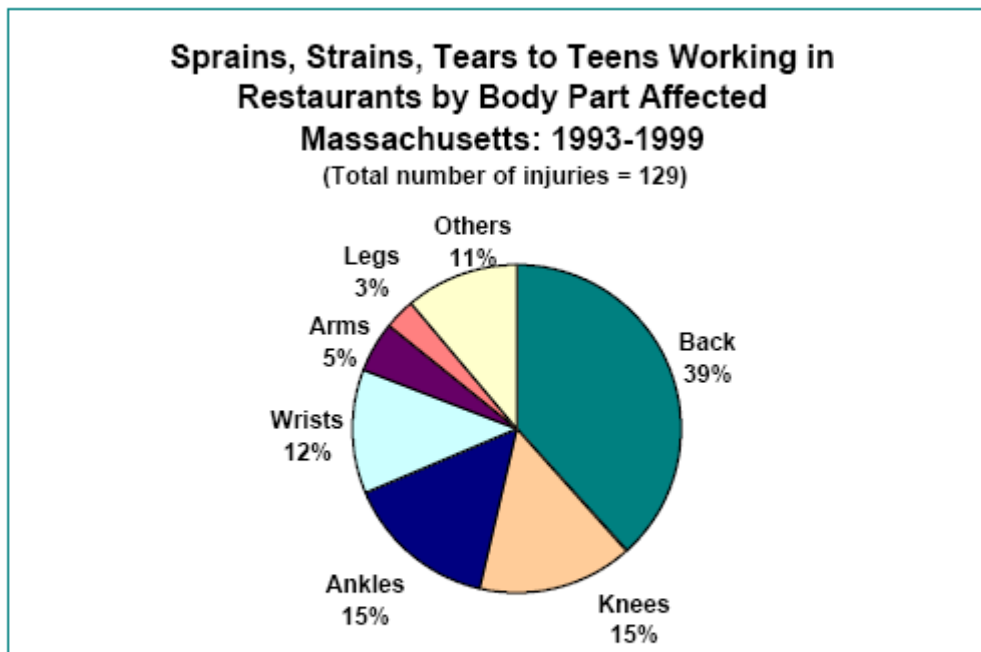
Sprains, Strains, and Tears

There was a shortage of people and a girl was unloading a truck - bringing food and soda down to the basement. I felt bad she was doing this heavy lifting so I helped out even though I had had back injury at work a few months before. This time I was lifting a 60-lb. soda container. My supervisor was with me and I told him I felt faint and felt a lot of pressure in my back. I went upstairs and worked at the drive-thru while I was in pain. I told my supervisor again that my back hurt and he said, 'What do you want me to do?' I left work even though I knew my supervisor was upset with me.

17-year-old crew trainer

- Over one-third (38%) of all sprains, strains, and tears affected the back (**Figure 7**). Back injuries are particularly concerning because workers with back injuries may be at increased risk for subsequent back injuries.
- Almost one-half of the sprains, strains and tears affected the joints, such as knees (15%), ankles (15%), and wrists (13%) (**Figure 7**).
- Of the 129 sprains, strains, and tears, 97 reports (75%) contain information about the manner in which the injury was inflicted. Forty-nine percent of these involved slips or falls, more than half of which (53%) were associated with a wet or greasy floor. One-quarter of the reports indicate the injury was sustained while lifting, carrying, or moving objects. The remaining reports contain no information about contributing factors.

Figure 7.



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993 - June 1999.

Fractures

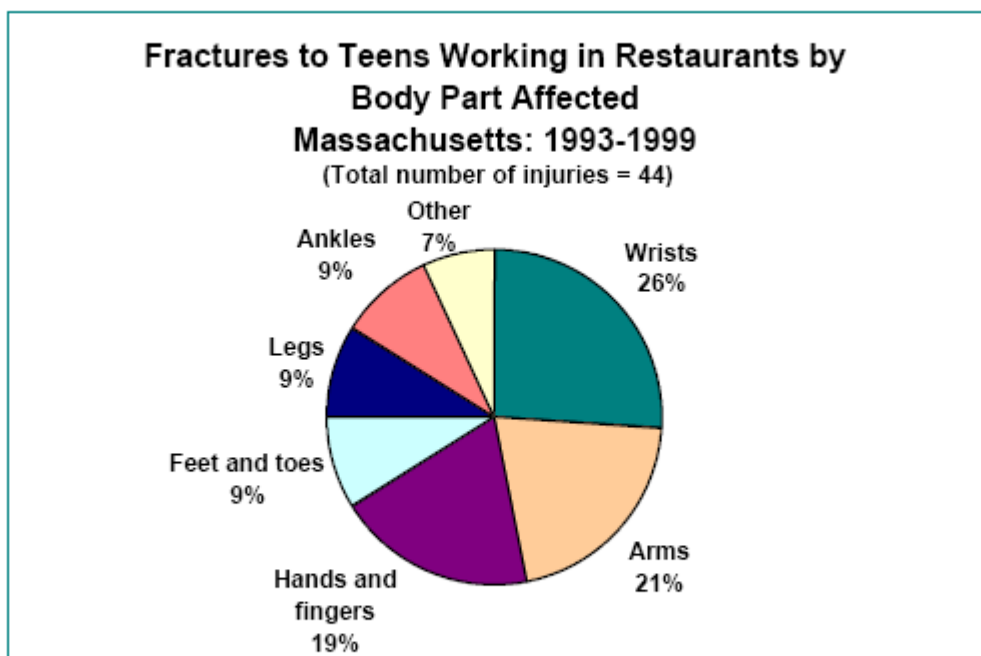
I was doing prep work on the pizzas. The pans used to cover the dough were stored stacked high to the ceiling and no stepladder was kept around. I'm only 5'3", so in order to reach the pans; I stood on the leg of a huge dough mixer. As I was getting down, I slipped, my leg twisted, and I broke my thighbone and kneecap. I was out of school for three weeks and missed three and a half months of work.

At the time of the interview, almost four months after the injury, then teen reported permanent problems were expected, such as the inability to run, limited leg function, and arthritis.

16-year-old-prep-cook

- Over one quarter of the fractures occurred to wrists (26%); an additional one-fifth of fractures occurred to the arms (21%) (**Figure 8**).
- Over one-quarter of the fractures were to lower extremities, including legs (9%); feet and toes (9%); and ankles (9%) (**Figure 8**).
- Of the 44 fractures, information about the source of injury is available for 35 reports (80%). Slipping and falling is listed as the event of injury in 20 reports (57%). Ten reports indicate that wet floors or obstructions such as carpet mats, etc caused the slip or fall. The remaining ten reports contain no information about contributing factors.

Figure 8.



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project, July 1993 - June 1999.

What Injured Teens Have to Say

Teens at Work Project staff have completed phone interviews with 129 young restaurant workers injured on-the-job. While the information from these interviews is not necessarily representative of all young restaurant workers who have been injured, it nevertheless provides some important insights. Of these interviewed teens:

- Forty-six percent reported they had received no on-the-job training about how to work safely and avoid injury.
- Twenty-percent reported they had no work permits (or educational certificates) for their jobs at the time they were injured. *NOTE: Massachusetts child labor laws require permits or certificates which are obtained through the school district where the teen resides.*
- As a result of their injuries, teens reported their usual activities were curtailed an average of 30 days.
- Eighty-one percent believed their injuries were preventable.